



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE RESPONSA OF THE BABYLONIAN GEONIM AS A SOURCE OF JEWISH HISTORY

BY JACOB MANN, Jews' College, London.

INTRODUCTION.¹

THE period of the Babylonian Geonim, extending over four centuries and a half of great importance for the history of the Jews, runs in a parallel line with the rise of the new religion of Islâm and the wonderful political ascendancy of the Arabs. In the time of the earliest Geonim falls the Hegira of Muhammed (622 C. E.), and during the whole of the Gaonic period (till about 1050 C. E.), the fate of the greater part of the Jews was coupled with the vicissitudes of the Moslem Empire. We have only to recall to memory the importance of such Jewish communities as Bagdad and Wasit, Kufa and Basrah, Fustât and Cairo, Kairowan and

¹ LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ג"ה = 'Responsen der Geonim', ed. Harkavy, in *Studien und Mittheilungen*, vol. 4, Berlin, 1887.

ג"י = תשובות הגאונים, Vienna, ed. Coronel.

ג"ל = תשובות הגאונים, Lyck, 1864, ed. Musafia.

ג"מ = תשובות הגאונים הקצרות, Mantua (re-edited by Rabinovitz, Vilna, 1885).

גמו"מ = גאונים מורה ומערב, ed. Müller, in the periodical *בית תלמוד*, vols. IV and V (also in a separate reprint).

ג"ק = תשובות גאונים קרמונים, ed. Cassel, Berlin, 1848.

ה"פ = הלכות פסוקות מן הגאונים, ed. Müller, Cracow, 1893.

ה"ג = תשובות הגאונים חמדה גנוזה, ed. Wolfensohn, Jerusalem.

ש"צ = תשובות הגאונים שערי צדק, ed. Modai, Salonica.

ש"ת = תשובות הגאונים שערי תשובה, ed. Fischl, Leipzig, 1858.

תש"ר = הלכות ותשובות, תורת של ראשונים, Parts I and II, ed. Horowitz, Frankfort, 1881.

[See over.

Fez, in order to realize the close connexion between the history of the Arabs with that of the Jewry of that period; all these cities were founded by the Arabs during the time of their wonderful territorial expansion. What the landing of the Arabs in Spain (711 C.E.) meant both for the Jews of that country and for Jewry at large is well known. The internal history of the Jews of that period is characterized by the spread and the general acceptance of Rabbinic Judaism as embodied in the Babylonian Talmud and by the opposition it was subjected to on the part of the sectarians in Israel, especially the Karaites. The greater part of our knowledge, scanty and fragmentary as it is, about the life of the Jews of that period, is derived from the Gaonic responsa. These letters of reply which the Geonim, as the recognized leaders of Jewry, sent to their correspondents all over the diaspora, comprise the greater part of the literary activity of the Geonim; in other literary works this period was far from being prolific, and still less productive in historical books. It should be kept in mind that even in the chronology of the period, from the

Geon. II = *Geonica II*, containing שאלות ותשובות הגאונים מן הגניזה אשר במצרים, ed. Ginzberg, New York, 1909.

JQR. = *Jewish Quarterly Review*.

RÉJ. = *Revue des Études Juives*.

Monatsschrift = *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*.

Einleit. = *Einleitung in die Responsen der Babylonischen Geonen*, by Dr. Joel Müller, Berlin, 1891.

ZfHB. = *Zeitschrift für Hebräische Bibliographie*.

Gr. V⁴ = Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, vol. V, fourth edition, 1909.

Sherira's *Letter* is quoted according to Neubauer's *Mediaeval Jewish Chronicles*, vol. I (*Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Semitic Series, vol. I, part iv, 1887).

The dates of the Geonim are given according to the 'Synchronistic List of the Geonim of Sura and Pumbedita' by Epstein and Bacher in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, sub 'Gaon'.

time of the last Amoraim till the end of the Gaonate, we would not find our way were it not for such a responsum known as the *Letter* of Sherira.² In fact, these responsa, as far as they are extant, are a real treasure-trove for the knowledge of the life of the Jews of that period, especially in such points where the information to be obtained from external sources entirely fails. The responsa furnish in particular ample material for our knowledge of the internal life of the Jews: their relations to the authorities and to their non-Jewish neighbours, their economic position, their communal organization, and their standard of culture and morality. All this material has not yet been made use of sufficiently; the Jewish history of that period was rather treated as a collection of biographies of the prominent spiritual and communal leaders. Important as this aspect of historical treatment is, the life of the people as a whole is of sufficient importance to be investigated and understood. In this treatise therefore the latter course of historical investigation will chiefly be followed.

In the following pages the responsa of the Babylonian Geonim only are considered, so that the general results obtained can hardly claim to be exhaustive and complete. In using the responsa for the purpose of reconstructing history great care has to be exercised. These responsa, when sent by the heads of the two great Babylonian Academies, had formal headings and conclusions,³ according

² Likewise the report of Nathan the Babylonian about the installation of the exilarch (in Neubauer, *Med. Jew. Chronicles*, II = Neub. II, 83-5) is quoted by Ibn Verga in his *Shebet Jehuda*, No. 42, as found in 'the responsa of early Geonim' (בתשובות גאונים ראשונים).

³ Some concluding phrases of the responsa are similar to those of the Muhammedan Fetwās, see Goldziher, *ZDMG.*, LIII, 645-52 and Müller, *Vienna Oriental Journal*, XIV, 171.

to the fashion of that age, in which the dates of composition as well as the names of the correspondents and the positions they held in their communities were mentioned. Unfortunately in most responsa at our disposal these formalities were not preserved. The several collectors of these responsa were chiefly anxious about the preservation of the Halakic decisions of the Geonim, and everything else was regarded as superfluous and was accordingly omitted. For the same sake of brevity the letters of question which the correspondents addressed to the Geonim are in most cases either abridged or not extant.⁴ Thus it results that in many cases the names of the Geonim are not mentioned at all, or there are differences in the various collections as regards the authors of the responsa, especially when they deal with similar cases. In a still less degree have the names of the correspondents, their places of residence, and the dates of composition been preserved. As a result, it is often very difficult to fix the place and the time of an event or custom we learn from the responsa. Similarly only on rare occasions are the names of the parties concerned given in the responsa. The men are called as a rule by the names of the twelve tribes in the order given in the Pentateuch, e.g. Reuben, Simeon, &c., or they assume other Biblical names; whereas the women are named after Jacob's wives, Leah, Rachel, &c. (cp. e.g. נ"ק, No. 132). Likewise it is difficult to ascertain the amounts of money invested in partnerships or in other business transactions. When copying the responsa, the

⁴ Cp. e.g. גמ"מ, No. 153 : ושאלתם שמעון שירד לגן ראובן באלמות בקא : רשות ב"ד וכל הענין, where reference was made in the complete form of question to an historic event concerning the Jews, as the answer of the Rabbi or Gaon shows.

scribes usually used the Talmudic expressions: 100 Minae (מאה מנה) or 100 denarii (מאה דינרין), cp. e.g. ח"ג, No. 49). The expression מדינת הים is used for any country to be reached by sea from the place of the correspondent.⁵

As regards such responsa, the place of destination of which is unknown, it may be argued that they were sent to communities distant from the academies. For the nearer communities there was no need for written answers; the scholars and the disciples that visited the two Academies during the large gatherings in the Kallah-months,⁶ hailing from the various communities around the academies, brought with them theoretical as well as practical questions and received the required answers orally from the Geonim. Only the distant communities in Persia, and especially those outside Babylon, sent written questions, for which written answers were required. Thus there actually exist responsa to the distant community of Basrah at the Persian Gulf, as will be shown later. R. Hai Gaon in a responsum to Kairowan (in *Or Zarua*, II, § 432, p. 177) mentions that the Halakhas of R. Yehudai Geon were known in Babylon only a hundred years after his death, when Jewish captives from Christian countries brought them to Babylon (cp. Epstein on the *Halakot Gedolot* (ח"ג), p. 21, and also Eppenstein, *Monatsschrift*, 1911, 732, note 1). This shows that

⁵ Cp. also the interesting remarks by the correspondent in מיינאש, שו"ת ר"י מיינאש, No. 114 (cited in בית תלמוד, I, 115 ff.), about the collections of Gaonic Responsa: ולא נעלם מאדוינו שהתשובות אינן עומדת על מצב אחד בפרט: הישנות, מהן שנכנס בהן ההפסד מצד המעתיקים אותן, ועם זה יתכן קצת מחשבותיהם לזולת בעליהן, גם הרבה מהנאונים הורו בתשובותיהם על שאלה אחת ואח"כ חזרו בהם מאותה תוראה או השינו מורים אחרים בכך.

⁶ Cp. the description in the report of Nathan the Babylonian (in Neub., II, 87-8). See also ג"ה, No. 312: אבל כתב בעל ההלכות בענין הזה: . . . והגיד לנו ששאלו החכמ' את מר ר' חנינאי נאון בחדש בלא . . .

these decisions of R. Yehudai were originally sent to congregations abroad. We find further R. Hai having no knowledge of responsa of his predecessors which his correspondents from foreign countries quote (see ג"ה Nos. 80, 260, 376, and 383). All this proves that most of the extant responsa were sent to communities distant from the academies. (About the various collections of the responsa see Müller, *Einleit.*, chs. 1-13.)⁷

I. THE JEWRIES OF THE DIASPORA AND THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE BABYLONIAN GEONIM.

The influence of the Geonim extended over a wide field. Babylon, Asia Minor, the countries around the Mediterranean, including even France and Germany, are all represented in the great number of responsa the Geonim sent to their correspondents all over the Diaspora. From these letters of the Geonim we learn either of the existence of Jewish communities in the above countries, or we obtain new information about those that are already known from other sources. There converged at Sura and Pumbedita, as

⁷ Most of the responsa contained in the collection which forms a part of Brit. Mus. Add. 26,977 (see Margoliouth, *Catalogue*, II, No. 566, and cp. Marx, *ZfHB.*, XIII, 172) are the same as found in ג"ל, though the order is somewhat different.—Of more interest is Brit. Mus. Add. 27,181 (see Margoliouth, *l. c.*, No. 565) containing extensive extracts from Juda Albarceloni's ספר הדין, a part of which formed השטרות from which considerable extracts are also to be found in the MS.; Halberstam's edition of פ"י שטרות לברצלוני בקצרה (1898), from Bodl. 890^s, should be compared with these extracts. As is the case with the other writings of Barceloni, the Gaonic responsa as well as those of Alfasi have been fully cited in this ס' הדין. Several of these responsa are not to be found in the other collections.

it were, connecting links from all the various communities, which transmitted on the one hand instruction and spiritual guidance from both those centres of Jewish learning, and recorded on the other hand the conditions of Jewry in the countries of its dispersion. At the beginning of the Gaonic period the influence of the Geonim probably extended only as far as Babylon. This fact will account for the very small number of responsa we possess from the earlier Geonim. Only with the growth of the Arabian expansion to the north and east of Arabia, and especially to the west reaching to Spain, and occasionally even to southern France and southern Italy, the sphere of activity of the Geonim widened, and the connexions of the academies with the outside communities increased. In the time of R. Hai (998-1038), the last of the Geonim, this intercourse reached its maximum. We shall now consider in detail the relations of each country with the Geonim.

1. *Irâk (Babylon)*. Irâk was the most important centre of Jewry during the Amoraic times and large numbers of Jews must have lived there. This position of importance Irâk retained throughout the Gaonic period. It was only towards the close of the Gaonate that the centre of gravitation was transferred to Spain and other European countries. During the time of the Amoraim till the beginning of the Gaonic period, the bulk of the Jews of Irâk must have lived around Nisibis, Nehardea, Mehusa, Sura, and Pumbedita. Already at the beginning of the third century, when Rab came to Sura, many Jews lived in that district.⁸ Of the large Jewish communities at Nisibis and Nehardea we learn already from Josephus (*Ant.*, XVIII, 9¹,

⁸ See Sherira, *Letter*, 29, top: ואיתרחיק לרובתא דלא הוה ביה תורה והיא : מורא רהיא מתא מחסיא והווי ישראל נפיש החם . . .

§§ 311-12 and 9^o, § 379). Several other Jewish communities in Babylon are referred to in the writings of the Geonim. Most of them are known already from references in the Babylonian Talmud. The references, however, that are to be found in the Gaonic literature, show us that these communities continued their existence for several centuries later. The Gaon of Pumbedita in 589 was R. Ḥanan of Iskiya, which place is perhaps identical with Sekia on the eastern bank of the Euphrates (see Brüll, *Jahrbücher*, II, 54, note 80). The community of Nehar Pekod was represented at the Academy of Sura by three Geonim, viz. R. Ḥaninah in 689, R. Jacob in 715, and Mar R. Mari ha-Cohen in 751. The Gaon of Pumbedita after 689, R. Ḥiyya, hailed from the province of Messene (מישן), near the Persian Gulf. R. Aḥai, the well-known author of the Sheeltolh, was from Shabḥa. The community of Naresh had the honour of having one of its sons, R. Nehilai, attain the dignity of Gaon of Sura (697). The Gaon of Pumbedita in 798 hailed from Shilhā (שלחי; about this place see *Geon.* I, 41, note 1). From a place called בלואדי, near Bagdad, came R. Isaiah, the Gaon of Pumbedita in 796 (*Letter*, p. 37, l. 12: מתא דמתקרבא לבגדד).

The last two centuries of the Persian rule in Babylon were for the Jews centuries of suffering and persecution for their religion, as we learn from the scanty information Sherira gives in his *Letter* (p. 35, top, and p. 33, bottom; Gr., V⁴, 3-16). Some details as to the dealings of the Magians are to be obtained from נ"ה, Nos. 297-8. There used to be a weekly tax upon every household to contribute wood for the fire-temples, and Jews had to contribute as well. Further, on a certain night, called עֲדָה, the Magians used to exact from every house candles for illuminating

their temples. With the advent of the Arabs (637–43 C. E.), the lot of the Jews was changed for the better, and the religious persecutions ceased. Perôz-Shabur, or Anbar,⁹ must have been then an important Jewish centre. Ali, the fourth Caliph, on his coming to Irâk in 655, was received near Perôz-Shabur by the Gaon R. Isaac at the head of a procession of ninety thousand Jews (Sherira in his *Letter*, 35, note 16, according to one reading). The town of Bagdad, however, founded by al-Manşûr in 762, but not finished till some years later, soon became the principal centre for the Jews of Irâk. A vivid picture of the enormous trade that flourished there is drawn by Kremer, *Culturgeschichte des Orients*, in the chapter headed 'Die Stadt des Heils' (vol. II, C. 2; see also Weil, *Geschichte der Kalifen*, II, 76–7, and Aug. Müller, *Der Islam im Morgen- u. Abendland*, I, 471 ff.). Jews settled in Bagdad soon after its foundation. Graetz (V⁴, 179) refers to the fact that R. Natroi, the successor of R. Samuel (748) to the dignity of Gaon of Pumbedita, was from Bagdad, as Sherira reports in his *Letter* (p. 35, bottom: *ומן בגדאד היה ומן תוחירא ברא*). But it is hardly possible that the Bagdad founded by Manşûr is here referred to. R. Natroi's successor, R. Dodai, became Gaon already in 761, i. e. before the foundation of Bagdad! The Gaon R. Natroi must have therefore come from the town called Bagdad that existed in that neighbourhood before the coming of the Arabs (see Berliner, *Beiträge zur Geographie u. Ethnographie Babylonien*, p. 25). From other references, however, we learn of the growth of the Jewish community in the Bagdad of Manşûr which soon outstripped its other namesake both in fame and greatness. About 814–16 the Jewish community there

⁹ About Anbar, see Gr., V⁴, 444, n. 1.

was already so important that the two rival Geonim of Pumbedita met there for the Kallah (כלה) meeting of the Academy (Sherira, *Letter*, 38, l. 5 ff.). Probably they held this gathering in the presence of the Exilarch, who must have had his residence in Bagdad, the seat of the central government of the empire since the accession of the Abbasides (761). As the political head of the Jews, the Exilarch had often to confer with the central government at the court of the Caliph (see Nathan's report in Neub. II, 84, bottom, and 85, top). When Jews had grievances against the authorities, they would turn to the Exilarch for intervention by the central authorities on their behalf. That the Exilarchs Ukba and David b. Zakkai lived in Bagdad we learn from Nathan's report (Neub. II, 78 ff.), where בבל seems to be identical with Bagdad (so also Gr. V⁴, 454, note 2). Al-Kaṣr, a suburb of Bagdad, was the birthplace of David b. Zakkai (Nathan, *ibid.*, 79, cp. Ginzberg, *Geon.*, I, 40, note 3). There lived also in Bagdad Jewish magnates of great influence at the Caliph's court. In the quarrels between Ukba and Cohen-Zedek, as well as between David b. Zakkai and Saadya, we see these magnates exerting their influence in favour of the one side or the other (see Nathan's report, *ibid.* II, 78 ff.). A somewhat legendary account of the influence of the Jewish magnate Netirah has been edited by Harkavy in *Berliner's Festschrift*, Hebrew part, 35 ff. Netirah's sons, Sahl and Isaac, were also both prominent men at the Caliph's court. After the death of David b. Zakkai, it seems that these magnates continued the practice of the Exilarch in intervening at the Caliph's court on behalf of the Jews. Thus in a responsum by some Rabbi the leaders of the community, to whom this responsum is

addressed, are requested to inform the Rabbi of their petitions and requests, who in his turn would instruct the influential Jews of Bagdad to intervene on their behalf with the central authorities (*Geon.*, II, 87: וכן כל הפיך ושאלה אשר יהי לכם מצד המלכות הגד תגידוהו לפנינו כי אז נצוה את בעלי בתים חשובים אשר בבגדד אשר אנחנו יושבים ביניהם. (בני מר' נטירא ובני מר אהרן . . . ואז ישיבו לכם מאת המלך . . .)). These 'sons of Aaron' are probably identical with those whom the Gaon R. Nehemiah (of Pumbedita, 962) in a letter (published by Cowley, *ŒQR.*, XIX, 106) mentions as the treasurers of all the donations sent for the Academy (I. 23: ויהיה הכל על ידי בני אהרן שמרם אל: 23). Perhaps the above responsum was also sent by R. Nehemiah, to whom, as it seems, the influential Jews of Bagdad lent their support. Ginzberg (*Geon.*, II, 87) thinks that the author could not have been a Gaon, since he lived in Bagdad. But from casual references it appears that both Sherira and Hai carried on their official duties for some time at Bagdad. Thus we find R. Hai (see *infra*) in ג"ה, No. 278, using the same phrase, הכין חזינא כי המדינה הזאת שאנו עכשיו בתוכה, והיא בגדאד. Probably the responsum was sent from that city. See further the extract from a Genizah letter (cited by Poznański, *Babyl. Geonim im nachgäon. Zeitalter*, p. 90): ומכתב יחיה בשלמו הגיע בקץ מרחשון מן בגדאד: עם מכתב אדוננו הא"י גאון שצ' אמר כי הוא יושב ושונה לפניו הלכות גדולות. Sherira in a responsum (*Geon.*, II, 206, l. 7 ff., missing in גמ"מ, No. 44, where it is ascribed to Sherira) writes וכל הדברים הללו היו נוהגין בהם החכמים בזמן שהיו בנהרדעא גם כב . . . (= בסורא) אבל עכשיו שנין בענו¹⁰ בבגדאד המדינה הגדולה . . . Still more noteworthy is MS. Bodl. (Hebr. c. 28. 49) containing a deed, apparently the confirmation of a will, drawn

¹⁰ Read שנקבצנו (so also Aptowitzer, *Mschr.*, 1911, 378).

up at the הגדול בי"ד of Sherira which met in Marheshwan, 1309 Sel.=998 C.E. at Bagdad עתיקא.¹¹ Lines 6-10 read as follows: (6) . . . [בב]א דמתיבתא בבית דינ[א] דמרנא ורבנא שרירא (7) [ב[ר]י]ה [ד]מרנא ורבנא חנניה ראש מתיבתא בירח מרחשון (8) [דשנת אל]פא וחל[ת מ]אה וחשע שנין למ[ני]נא דר[ני]לנא [ב]י[ה] בשוקא עתיקא (9) דבגדר דעל צדי [דגל]ת טאטי מ[ותבה] חצר [קדמנא] אלי באב (10) אלמתיבה אלי בית דין הגדול מ[ותבה] חצר [קדמנא] אלי באב. The document is signed (l. 23) by נחמיה בן אברהם [ס:]עדיה בן שלום and countersigned by Sherira (ועליה כרזה שרירא ראם | אלמתיבה | ישע רב) Sherira at Bagdad. This fragment is of importance in showing us that in the very year of his resignation (or a year before, if we take Sel. to begin in 312 B.C.E.), Sherira presided over the supreme court of the Academy which sat at Bagdad. This will throw new light on the disputed question about the two separate courts of Sherira and Hai in the period of their common activity (see especially Aptowitz, *JQR.*, N.S., IV, 35-8). The superscription of ג"ה, No. 198, mentions that the responsum came to שער הישיבה שלגולה לפני אדוננו הא"י ראש ישיבת נאון יעקב ונקראה לפנינו וצוינו לכתוב את תשובתה וגם הורמה אל בית דין הגדול לפני אדוננו שרירא ראש הישיבה הגדול ועמד עליה וצוה לחתום על אל שער ג"ה, No. 371, mentions that the responsum came to

¹¹ Dr. Cowley (in *Catalogue of Hebr. MSS.*, vol. II, 378, 49) thought that the 'מרור חנניה ר' מת' and 'מרור שרירא ראש מתיבתא' בי"ד הגדול. But it is evident that the fragment speaks of Sherira the son of Ḥanania. We find Sherira addressed in this way in ג"ה, Nos. 315, 329, 371 and 419. Poznański, in *ZfHB.*, X, 143-4, failed to note this, and thus suggested that Ḥanania was Dayan in Bagdad. I have consulted Dr. Cowley on this point, who in reply kindly sent me his own copy of the fragment. I find that there he also conjectured this. My thanks are due to him for his kind permission to extract the lines in the text from his copy.

¹² Bodl. 2669⁴, Arabic responsum, is the same as ג"ה, No. 198.

אִתְּשִׁיל מִקְּמִי רַב שְׁרִירָא גֵאֻן בֵּית דִּין הַגְּדוֹל וּלְבֵית דִּינוּ שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל, and also in Ittur, I, 61^d, we read אִתְּשִׁיל מִקְּמִי רַב שְׁרִירָא גֵאֻן בֵּית דִּין הַגְּדוֹל וּלְבֵית דִּינוּ שֶׁל רַב הָאִי. Now to explain all these passages to refer exclusively to the period between Sherira's abdication and demise, about 998–1000, when out of deference to the retired Gaon his name was inserted in the documents issued by the Academy, as Aptowitzer does, is forced. It is more likely to assume that Hai, after having been ordained as אב"ר, looked after the affairs of the Academy at Pumbedita while Sherira presided over the בֵּי"ד הַגְּדוֹל at Bagdad. Thus responsa had to be sent up from the Academy to Sherira for ratification. After Sherira's death Hai presided over the בֵּי"ד הַגְּדוֹל at Bagdad, and thus we find him writing from this city. Likewise the Gaon Nehemiah (962) might have lived in Bagdad as the president of the supreme court. The transfer of the court from Pumbedita to Bagdad probably took place during the interregnum of the Exilarchate after the death of David b. Zakkai. There was need for a central Jewish authority at the capital of the empire and as a substitute for the Exilarch's supreme court, the בִּאבְנָא דְּמִרְוּתָא (see *infra*), the Gaon of Pumbedita had to transfer his supreme court to Bagdad. From the letter of the Exilarch Hezekiah II, dated Nisan, 1332 (?) Sel. = 1020 (?) (published by Kamenetzky, *RÉŹ.*, LV, 51–3), we know now about the intervals in the occupation of the Exilarchate after David b. Zakkai.¹³ However, this Exilarch seems to have re-established his own supreme court (cp. l. 24: שֶׁא שְׁלוֹם מִמֶּנִּי וּמִרְאִשֵּׁי שְׁתֵּי

¹³ מִן יְחֻקֵּיהוּ רִאשֹׁן בֶּן דָּוִד בֶּן יְחֻקֵּיהוּ רִנָּן בֶּן יְהוֹרָה בֶּן דָּוִד רִנָּן: 11. 1–4. Thus after the death of David b. Zaccai there was an interregnum. David's grandson, Hezekiah I, only again assumed the dignity. Hezekiah's son, David, again does not bear the title of רִנָּן, only his son Hezekiah II.

ישיבות (i. e. Hai and Sam. b. Ḥofni) ומן אברהם אב בין דין וכו' (ריינא דבבא דמרוחא).

Next to Bagdad there must have been an important Jewish community in Basrah, which city was founded in 635. Owing to its favourable position, Basrah soon became the centre of the maritime trade of the empire, especially after the foundation of Bagdad, when it was connected with this town by means of canals (cp. Aug. Müller, *ibid.*, I, 235). The Jewish community there was under the jurisdiction of the Sura Academy, as Nathan tells us in his report (Neub., II, 86, bottom). Accordingly we have responsa addressed to Basrah by the Sura Geonim R. Moses, 823 (*Geon.*, II, 212-13; therein is also mentioned a small Jewish community in הובלת, Obolla) and R. Naḥshon, 874-82 (*Geon.*, II, 33, bottom, and 34, top). Only in the time of R. Hai we find questions from Basrah sent to the Academy of Pumbedita (*Geon.*, II, 71; probably נ"ה, Nos. 221-2, 422 are also by R. Hai). In *Geon.*, II, 71 the correspondents of R. Hai state that disciples have learned the passage of Talmud, which formed the subject of their questions to the Gaon, before the head of the Academy of Sura (תלמודא נלכו פי דאר ראם מחיבה סורא).¹⁴ Probably this refers to Samuel b. Ḥofni, the last Gaon of Sura. After his death in 1034, the scholars of Basrah sent their difficulties to R. Hai. There is no proof for Eppenstein's statement (*Monatsschrift*, 1911, 469) that after Saadya's death the activities of the Sura Academy were continued in Basrah. It is true that Saadya's opponent, Joseph bar Satia, not being able to keep up the Academy at Sura after Saadya's

¹⁴ Poznański's inference from this passage that 'there was in Pumbedita a residence for the scholastic president of Sura' (*JQR.*, N.S., III, 416) has no foundation, as the responsum came from Basrah.

death, settled in Basrah (*Letter*, p. 40). But it is nowhere mentioned that he held any official position there as the head of a school. From Nathan's report concerning the income which the Exilarchs as well as the academies derived from the Babylonian communities (Neub., II, 86-7), we learn that Jews lived in the districts of Nahrvan and Holwan as well as in the provinces of Fars (פרס) and Chorasán. This we find corroborated in Gaonic responsa. Sherira and Hai speak of Jews in Media, Persia, and Elam (in a responsum published by Harkavy in the periodical *הקדם*, II, p. 89). So also R. Hai in another responsum (quoted in *ספר העתים*, ed. Schorr, p. 27) mentions communities in 'Elam and the islands of Persia'.¹⁵ Of particular

ועדין יש ספרי אפטרותא שיש בהם ענין למנחה לכל שנה . . . ¹⁵ Cp. *ויש מקומות בארץ עילם ואיי הים של פרס שרגילין בה עד עכשיו*. further *Geon.*, II, 279, ll. 12-13. About the Jews of Charasan, cp. Harkavy, *מאסף נדרים* (in *המליץ*, 1879, 81) where he quotes Moses Ibn Ezra in the name of Saadya, *וכזה (שכתח ל"הק בגלות בבל) קרה לשארי בני גלות, מאסף נדרים*. From Nathan's report (Neub., II, 78) we learn that Charasan belonged to the sphere of influence of the Pumbedita Academy and that the deposal and exile of the exilarch Ukba was due to his attempt to deprive the academy of the revenue from this province. This is corroborated by an interesting responsum by Hai which I have copied from Brit. Mus. Add. 27,181 (cp. above, note 7) fol. 15a (נ"ה). *וכתב רב האי זל הו יודעים כי הפסד גדול אצלכם בזה שיש לכם מנהג לקדש אשה שלא בשעת הכתובה או שטר אירוסין, ואעפ כי האשה מתקדשת בשוק בפני שנים, אלא שיש במנהג זה הפסד ומק שנה לא נשמע בבבל כזאת ואין יודעין כל עיקר קידושי אשה אלא בשעת כתובה ובבוראסן היה מכמה שנים יותר מק שנה מנהג לקדש בטבעת במושב משתה וכיצא בזה ורבו הטענות טענות וכפירת קידושין ויצא הדבר להפסד ותיקן להן זקיננו מרננא (מרנא ז.) ורבנא יהודה גאון שלא יקדשו אלא בסדר בבל בכתובה וחתם ידי עדים וברכת אירוסין וכל שאינו בסדר הזה תיקן להן שאין חוששין לו כדאמ' כל המקדש ארעת' דרבנן קמקדש ואפקיעניהו רבנן לקידוש' מיניה' אף אתם ראויים לסלק מנהג כזה וכל המקדש שלא בכתובה ובשטר אירוסין קנסוהו עד שיתקן הדבר* We see

Jewish communities mention should be made of Nehavend from whence the well-known Karaite Benjamin (800-820), and of Isfahan in Persia where the imposter Abu-'Isa declared himself Messiah in the reign of the Caliph Abdul-Melik, 685-705 (see Gr., V⁴, 173-5 and note 15). In Nisibis there lived a member of the Davidic family who, but for an unfortunate event, would have succeeded David b. Zakkai to the dignity of Exilarch (cf. *infra*). Among the Babylonian Jews there settled a number of Jews from foreign countries. A number of Jews, whom Omar drove out from Ḥaibar in Arabia (about 640), settled near Kufa (Gr., V⁴, 119). R. Hai reports a responsum (above, p. 465) of Jewish captives from Christian countries that were brought to Babylon, probably during the wars the Arabs had with the Byzantines in 863-4 (see Epstein on the הלכות גירולות, p. 21). Finally, owing to the large trade carried on between Egypt and Babylon, many Egyptian Jews settled in Babylon, as R. Hai tells us in a responsum in ג"ה, No. 285, end.¹⁶

2. The next country to be considered after Babylon is *Palestine*. Very little is known about the conditions of the Palestinian Jewry during the Gaonic period (see Gr., V⁴, 17-32, and now also Krauss, *Studien zur Byzantinisch-jüd. Geschichte*, Vienna, 1914, p. 1 ff.). Some new information is to be obtained from Genizah Fragments. The persecutions which the Palestinian Jews were subjected to under Heraclius, immediately preceding the advent of the Arabs,

thus that it was the Pumbedita Gaon, R. Juda b. Mar R. Samuel (906-18), the grandfather of Sherira, who induced the Jews of Chorasan to alter their custom in uniformity with that of Irāk (בבלי).

. . . והרבה מצויין מבני מצרים שבאין לבבל ושוכנין בעכברא או בנהרואני ונודעין כן לאחר כמה שנים אלעכברי ואלנהרואני. This probably refers to Jews.

are described by a supposed contemporary of R. Jehudai of Sura (760). The Byzantine rulers decreed that the Palestinian Jews should neither read the Sh'ma nor say their prayers, but they allowed them to assemble in the synagogues on Sabbath morning for the purpose of reciting Psalms.¹⁷ As soon as the Arabs conquered Palestine all these persecutions were stopped. At the beginning of the Muhammedan rule there took place some influx of Arabian Jews who were expelled by Muhammed and Omar. A part of the Banu Kainuka settled in Palestine in 624, a group of the Banu Nadir followed them in 625, and finally a number of Ḥaibar Jews in 640 (see Gr., V⁴, 109 and 111; Leszynsky, *Die Juden in Arabien z. Zeit Mohammeds*, 63, 72-4 and 114). Very little is known of the Palestinian Jews in the time of the early Geonim. From the fact that R. Aḥa of Shabḥa left Babylon for Palestine about 760 (*Letter*, p. 35 bottom and 36 top), where he composed the well-known שאילתות, a collection

¹⁷ *Geon.*, II, 50-51 (see *ibid.*, pp. 48 f.): וכן אמר מר יהודאי ז"ל שגזרו: שמד על בני ארץ ישראל שלא יקראו קריית שמע ולא יתפללו והיו מניחין אותן ליכנס שחרית בשבת לומר ולומר מעמדות והיו אומרים בשהרית בשבת מעמד וקדוש ושמע במוסף והיו עושים דברים הללו באונס ועכשיו שכלה הקב"ה מלכות אדום וביטל גזרותיה ובאו ישמעלים והניחום לעסוק בתורה. . . . (Cp. *Geon.*, I, 207, top, and II, 420.) Ginzberg (p. 48) assumes that the author of the responsum was a Palestinian. This is not clear from the fragment; nor is it certain that it constitutes a part of a responsum. It may perhaps be a part of תלמידיה דראבא פירקוי בן באבוי תלמידיה דראבא, who in his turn was the disciple of Yehudai Geon (cp. especially, Schechter, *Hoffmann-Festschrift*, Hebrew part, 262). As Ben Bebai's master was Yehudai's disciple, it is only natural that Yehudai should figure so prominently in Ben Bebai's פירקוי, as we find in the fragment in *Geonica*. It would be of interest to compare the handwriting of fragment Schechter with that of Geon. (T.-S. Loan 97). It should be added that T.-S. 10 K, 9¹ also contains a colophon פירקוי בן באבוי תלמידיה דראבא וראבא תלמיד מרב יהודאי גאון זכ לז.

of sermons delivered on Sabbaths, it was inferred that there must have existed then Jewish communities in Palestine (see Gr., V⁴, 179–80). Likewise the pilgrim Willibald who visited Palestine in 765 writes, ‘ibi (Tiberiade) sunt multae ecclesiae et synagogae Iudaeorum’ (quoted by Graetz, *ibid.*, 122, 3). The responsum of R. Jehudai’s contemporary, mentioned above, adds new information about the Palestinian Jewry of those times. There existed several communities in Palestine and in some of them, including Jerusalem, Babylonian Jews that settled there were in such considerable numbers, that they could enforce their will in matters concerning the ritual of the synagogue.¹⁸ We learn further from נמו”מ, No. 39, that Jews from Africa as well as from Babylon married women in Palestine and settled there. Probably these Babylonian Jews continued their connexions with the Geonim and their Academies. Among the countries that sent material support to the Babylonian academies Palestine is also included (Ibn Daud, ed. Neubauer, p. 67 : קודם לכן היתה סבה מאת הקב”ה שנכרת : חוקם של ישיבות שהיה הולך מארץ ספרד וארץ המערב ואפריקא ומצרים (וארץ הצבי). Yet only a few responsa are extant wherein it is expressly stated that they were sent to Palestine.¹⁹ R. Hai

אין אומרים בא”י קדוש ושמע אלא בשבת : *Geon.*, II, 52, ll. 20–24 : או בימים טובים בלבר בשחרית בלבר חוץ מירושלים ובכל מדינה שיש בה בבליאין שעשו מריבה ומחלוקת עד שקיבלו עליהם לומר קדושה בכל יום אבל בשאר מדינות ועיירות שבא”י שאין בהם בבליאין אין אומרים קדוש אלא בשבת ובימים טובים בלבר.

¹⁸ On the other hand, cp. הדר זקנים 55 a (cited by Berliner, *ZfHB.*, IV, 149) : ומצאתי שהובאו קונדריסין אל רב עמרם גאון הגולה מר’ הלל : שהיה מארץ ישראל, אני הלל ראיתי קברי אלדר ומירד אחי אהרן מן ג”ל. The well-known responsum in ח”ג, No. 93 (cf. ג”ל, No. 8, and ח”ג, No. 166 in the name of Hai) is headed in Or. 1054, fol. 87 a (see Margoliouth, *Catalogue*, III, 509, col. 2) **מחשוי אנשי ארץ ישראל לבבל** (in ח”ג and in ג”ל) it is

mentions in ג"ה, No. 64, a question that reached him from 'the scholars of Jerusalem' (החכמים החבירים אשר בירושלים). It is difficult to ascertain who these scholars were and whether they held any official dignity. Thanks to the Genizah finds we know now a good deal about the academy founded in Jerusalem, the heads of which bore also the title of ראש ישיבת גאון יעקב (see now especially Poznański, *Babylon Geonim*, &c., 81 ff.). But it is as yet very obscure what relations existed between the Babylonian Geonim and the Palestinian Academy. No clear case has so far been established that Sherira and Hai corresponded with the Palestinian Geonim. It is very doubtful whether the letter of Sherira and Hai to a ראש ישיבה, dated 13th of Ab, 1300 Sel. = 989 C.E., and containing the interesting passage בבקשה מן ראש ישיבה שיחי לער שיצוה להקרא האגרת בבקשה מן ראש ישיבה כי כן נעשה לאבותינו פעמים רבות וכו' was really sent to the Palestinian Gaon, Joseph ha-Cohen, as Dr. Marmorstein, who published this letter from a MS. Adler in *ZDMG.*, LXVII, 630, maintains. It is rather strange that the letter should end abruptly with לר' יוסף without mentioning his priestly descent nor his official dignity. It is possible that לר' יוסף forms the beginning of the next item in the MS. Adler which thus requires further investigation.²⁰ The

expressly mentioned וחכמים וכל אנשי בבל כך עושים. But the above heading is overlined in Or., which may denote that it should be deleted.

²⁰ After having examined this manuscript, I find my doubts about Marmorstein's identification fully confirmed. The fragment consists of two joined leaves in the same handwriting (detached in MS. Adler, No. 4009; a facsimile of leaf 1 a is, I understand, to appear in the forthcoming Catalogue of Mr. Adler's MSS. Collection). The first half of leaf 1 a covers the part of the letter by Sherira and Hai (to יז באב שנת א"ש). Removed from this stands in the middle of the line לר' יוסף. Then follows on the next line a letter by Joseph ibn Abitur, covering the remainder of leaf 1 a and the following three pages. This letter is addressed to Samuel

reading of the Gaon's letter in public need not refer to the custom prevailing in Palestine which mostly took place on Mount Olivet on Hoshana Rabba, as Poznański, *l.c.*, 85-6 thinks. We find in ח"ג, No. 37, the Gaon Aaron ha-Cohen (of Pumbedita, 943) writing to his correspondents: הלכך יקבצו הוקנים ויקראו התשובה של השאלה הזאת ויעמדו על ענינה יאות ויעשו כפי שפירשנו וכו'.

On the other hand it appears from a letter of the Palestinian Gaon Solomon b. Jehuda (*Saadyana* 113 = *ƒQR.*, XIV, 483, ll. 42-6) that in his time there arose friction between the Babylonian (i.e. Pumbedita) and Palestinian schools over their respective spheres of influence in Egypt (באשר המקום) הזה על שמי יהיה המקום האחר על שמו [זה] בשם בני בבל וזה בשם בני ארץ יש האמנם יבקש לעקור שם ישיבת ארץ יש מארץ מצרים לבלתי . . . (היות לה שם הלוא יגרום לעצמו לבלתי הזכר בה . . .).

Anyhow, the existence of an Academy in Jerusalem since, at least, the middle of the tenth century would account for such a small number of responsa having been sent to Palestine by the last Pumbedita Geonim. What one would like to know is whether the Babylonian Jews residing in Palestine, whom we have seen above (p. 474) in considerable numbers already in the middle of the eighth century, continued throughout the centuries their connexions with the academies of their native country. Perhaps further Genizah finds will enlighten us concerning this point.

b. Joseph ראש יש גאון יעקב (cited by Marmorstein, *l.c.*, 637, n. 1). As both letters are in the same handwriting, it is evident that they are only copies from the originals. The copyist thus placed לר יוסף in front of Joseph's (ibn Abitur) letter, i.e. written by him! Hence the letter of Sherira and Hai was never addressed to Joseph (ha-Cohen, Gaon of Jerusalem). More probably it was sent either to Fustât or Kairowan; in both places there existed schools (ישיבות). The remarks of Poznański (*Babylon. Geonim*, 85-6), based on Marmorstein's publication, will have to be cancelled.

3. The most frequent intercourse, however, the Babylonian Academies had with the north-African communities and also with Spain. We shall begin with *Egypt*, the nearest North-African country on the way from Babylon to the Occident. The connexion between Babylon and Egypt became the more easy after the conquest of Egypt by the Arabs under 'Amr ibn al-'As in 639-42. This famous general founded Fustât and connected it with the Red Sea by repairing the neglected canal between the Nile and the Gulf of Suez (see Aug. Müller, *ibid.*, I, 266). In a short time a very important Jewish community sprang up there. Already in 750 there existed in Fustât a Jewish community under the leadership of a Babylonian Jew, Abu-Ali Ḥasan of Bagdad (see *ŒQR.*, XVII, 426-30). Many Jews from Babylon as well as from Palestine settled there, forming two separate communities, the so-called 'synagogue of the Babylonians' (בניסת הבבליים, אֶלְעֶרְאקִיין) and the 'synagogue of the Palestinian Jews' (אֶלְשֶׁאמִיין, see especially Worman, *ŒQR.*, XVIII, 1-39; Bacher, *ibid.*, 564, and Poznański, *RÉŒ.*, XLVIII, 157-60). In a fragment published by Goldziher, *RÉŒ.*, LV, 58, we read: וממנו אנו שתי: בתי דינין ומשלש הקהלות המעולות קהל בניסת הירושלמיים וכנסת הבבליים (see now also Shapira, *Mélanges H. Derenbourg*, 121-30). It is only natural that the great number of Babylonian Jews in Fustât should have turned to the Babylonian academies for religious instruction. Yet only a few responsa of the Babylonian Geonim are expressly mentioned as having been sent to Egypt. We find chiefly the later Geonim, especially Sherira and Hai, maintaining some connexions with Egypt.²¹ In a letter from Fustât to Hai (cited by

²¹ Cp. ג"ה, No. 290, beginning, probably by Sherira and Hai, see *Einleit.*,

Worman, *l.c.*, 12) it is mentioned that the synagogue of the Babylonians in Fustât was named after the Pumbedita Academy (ראש ישיבה של גולה . . . ממנו אנחנו הקהלות) ²² The letter of Solomon b. Jehuda (above, p. 476) also tells us of Egyptian communities apparently under the influence of the Babylonian Academy. Of course, Saadya, who hailed from

ספר העתים, ג"ל, No. 61, and ג"ה, no. 312, by R. Samuel b. Ḥofni; ג"ה, no. 43-4, ed. Schorr, p. 3, by R. Hai, seems to have been sent to Egypt; ג"ק, No. 72, fol. 24 a, l. 6. See also ח"ג, No. 27, by R. Zemah, probably of Pumbedita, 872-90. In Wertheimer's קהלת שלמה, p. 72, there are printed the headings of nine responsa by Sherira and Hai to Egypt [הספר] הששי למצרים חשוכה (אדונינו שרירא ואדונינו האיי גאון ואב ויל). Cf. also Poznański, *RELJ.*, XLVIII, 161-2; LI, 57-8; *JQR.*, N.S., III, 462, note 14.

²² The following lines, which I have copied from this Genizah fragment (T.-S. 16-318), will bring out more clearly the great reverence in which R. Hai was held. (5) . . . [פ]אר צפירת גדולת סגלת דגלת קדש[ת]. (6) ישישת מרינו ורבינו האיי גאון כל ישראל ומופת הדור יתמיך אלהינו (7) הופקותיו ויתדיר שררותו ויוסיף שלטונו אמן ויעצף ממשלתו יתקף ויפאר (8) את כל המוני ישראל בארך ימיו בן האדון הגדול אדונינו ומרינו ורבינו שרירא (9) פאר הישיבה שלגולה העתיק במחצות מצדיקי הרבים ובראש בני עליה (10) הוא מַסֵּב באסוף אותו יי במנוחת עדן: נהרי השלום הנטוים (11) ברשיון עושהו במרומי עליותיו ימשכו לאדונינו גאוננו ולכל בני ישיבתו לעד (12) ישא אדוננו גאון עם ייי שלום גדול ממנו אנחנו הקהלות המתפללים בכנסת (13) הבבליים הקרואה על שם ישיבתו כי מורים הם לצור מעוזם אשר הפיקם רצון (14) בהכניסם אליו והוא בחסדו יפארם במשיכת ימי חלדו עד ביאת הממשלה (15) הראשונה . . . ממלכת לבת ירושלם. From lines 13-14 it appears that the honour of calling the synagogue by the name of the Academy was given by Hai. The correspondents mention a letter which Hai sent to Abraham, styled פקר ורד כתאב גאוננו אלי אדירנו (ll. 21-23) בחר הישיבה and אלוף, חבר (וגדולינו החבר האלוף מרז ורז אברהם בחר הישיבה). Very likely Abraham b. Sahalon is meant here who, as will be shown elsewhere, was the spiritual head of the Babylonian community at Fustât, corresponding to the dignity of Ephraim b. Shemarya of the Palestinian congregation. ראש כלל and אלוף, Abraham's successor was his son Sahalon, styled

Fayum, must have kept up close relations with his native country during the whole period of his Gaonate (cp. e.g. *ƳQR.*, XVI. 290-3, 295-7).

In discussing the relations of Sherira and Hai with Egypt, some remarks must be added on the famous scholars Shemarya and his son Elḥanan. In spite of the important Genizah finds hitherto published, the position these scholars held in Egypt and their relations both with the schools of Babylon and of Palestine are still not clear enough, and require further elucidation. To begin with, it is not yet certain whether Shemarya resided at Cairo, as it is generally assumed, though without any basis, or at Fustât (so now Poznański, *Babyl. Geonim*, p. 98; in אנשי קירואן, No. 11, he begins with Fustât and ends up with Cairo). According to Ibn Daud, Shemarya, after having been ransomed from slavery at Alexandria, settled in מצרים, which generally stands for Fustât; but the famous account of Ibn Daud about the 'four captives' is now much questioned (cp., e.g. Schechter, *ƳQR.*, XI, 643 ff. and Poznański, אנשי קירואן, No. 18). We know now that already Shemarya's father occupied an official dignity, and very likely in Egypt (see *ƳQR.*, XIX, 729, No. XX: אלחנן ראש הסדר של כל ישראל בן שמריה אב בית דין של כל ישראל בן אלחנן הרב הראש²³ (בן הרב, אבי הרב, בן סמוך ואב סמוך, l. 24, *ƳQR.*, XI, 643 ff.). Eppenstein's suggestion (*Mschr.*, 1911, 619-20) that Shemarya was a Nagid is hardly likely. All the evidence tends to show that he was an eminent scholastic (and not a political) authority. If Shemarya resided at Fustât, as seems

²³ Shemarya is also styled הרב הראש, but here he is called אב"ד, while his son was already ראש הסדר. It thus seems that the title אב"ד was superior to that of ראש הסדר, which was probably the same as הרב הראש (ag. Poznański, אנשי קירואן, p. 14, note 1).

more probable, it would be of consequence to ascertain over *which* community he wielded influence, whether the Babylonian or the Palestinian congregation.²⁴ This point has not yet been considered. From the important fragment published by Neubauer (*JQR.*, VI, 222-3) we gather that both Shemarya and his son Elhanan studied at a Babylonian Academy, and very likely it was Pumbedita (see Halberstam, *ibid.*, 596). There it seems that Shemarya obtained the title אב"ר (cp. p. 223, l. 17, לא שמנוהו, ולולי בן לא שמנוהו, לנו למשנה, which perhaps means משינה of the Gaon, i.e. אב"ר). Thus it would be natural that in Egypt he should have represented the interests of the Babylonian Academy. But no questions from Shemarya to Babylon have so far been preserved. On the other hand, from letters by Sherira, addressed probably to Shemarya (*Saadyana*, XLV and XLVI, cp. p. 119, l. 17 and p. 124, ll. 85-6; see also Eppenstein, *l. c.*, pp. 473 ff.), we learn of the Gaon's complaint that the Academy is neglected as regards material support and is not consulted in religious affairs. The Gaon reminds his correspondents that their forefathers used to send all their religious questions to the Academy (p. 120, ll. 13 ff., p. 124, ll. 75 ff.). However, Elhanan, Shemarya's son, sent his difficulties both to Hai and Samuel b. Hofni (ה"ה, Nos. 1 and 314, *JQR.*, XVIII, 430 = *Geon.*, II. 59).

As regards the relations of Shemarya and Elhanan with the Palestinian Academy, not enough is so far known to render a definite opinion possible. But it appears that they were strained. The Gaon Solomon b. Jehuda seems to

²⁴ Shemarya's residence at Fustât would also be borne out by the fact that he signs a legal document drawn up at Fustât and dated Tuesday, 14 Elul, 1002 C. E. (see *JQR.*, XI, 646, note 2).

have had a rather unfavourable opinion about Shemarya and Elḥanan. In the interesting letter to Shemarya b. Ephraim (published by Dr. Marmorstein, *REJ.*, LXVIII, 1914, 44-5), Solomon b. Jehuda writes: ונוסף יגון על מכאוב גם (i. e. his own) החשוד ישוטט על הזקנים ויתאנה ויאמר: „ראו מכתב פלוני כי גנה את הראשונים באמרו כי הראשונים הקודמים כל אחד ואחד מהם עמד על דם חבירו וגם גנה את ר' אלחנן באמרו: התבונן מעשה

” ²⁵ The Gaon admits that he wrote these words, which he declares to have been in accordance with the facts כי בן (אמנם כי אלה דברי והכל מעידים לי כי בן (היה וכו') ’. Further, in the somewhat obscure fragment, dated Adar (1)332 Sel.=1020 C.E. (published by Kamenetzky, *REJ.*, LV, 49-50) we find Elḥanan apparently trying to constrain the Palestinian Gaon in the carrying out of his authority (ll. 2-7: ראש : (אלחנן) כי בא ממנו כתב אל שער הישיבה הגיד לו (בו perhaps (הסדר ?) כי שלח כתב אל מרנו גאון צבי יחי לעד הזהירו לבל יחדש דבר עד (אשר יקבנו בשם אבות). By גאון צבי it seems that the Palestinian Gaon is meant (against Poznański, *ibid.*, 246).²⁶ From these details it will appear that there existed some friction between Shemarya and Elḥanan on the one side and the Palestinian Academy on the other. Here, again, we must look forward to further Genizah finds for elucidation.

4. Turning from Egypt to the next North African

²⁵ For הראשים הקודמים read הראשונים הקודמים. This important letter (it is T.S. 13 J 9² and not 13 I 12²), which has not been edited with sufficient care, will be fully discussed in another connexion.

²⁶ Poznański (p. 246, note) also noticed that גאון צבי usually denotes the Palestinian Gaon (cp. ישיבת צבי; also צבי = Palestine in Saadyana, 89, l. 26); but he dismissed the suggestion with the statement that the Palestinian Academy was not in existence till after 1020. Of course, it is now well established that the Palestinian Gaonate dates back much earlier (cp. above, pp. 475-76).

country, comprising the two Arabic provinces of *Ifrikiya* and *Maghreb* (modern Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco) we find the Jewish communities maintaining throughout the greater part of the Gaonic period the closest connexions with the Academies of Sura and Pumbedita. There existed in these two provinces a group of more or less important Jewish communities, viz. Cables, Nefusa (نَفُوسَة), see Yakut, *Geographisches Wörterbuch*, ed. Wüstenfeld, IV, 800) and Tobna or Tobya in Ifrikiya, as well as Tahert (modern Tuggurt), Tlemsen, Ashir, Fez, and Segelmessa in Magreb (Morocco). The most important community, however, was that of Kairowan (see particularly Poznański's article on אנשי קירואן, in Harkavy's *Festschrift*, Hebrew Part, 175-220, and also in a separate reprint). We find many references in the Gaonic responsa to the 'people of Africa' (אנשי אפריקא), which show that their correspondence with the Geonim goes back to a very early date. The important responsum of R. Natronai (in ח"ג, No. 15 = *Geon.*, II, 30) was in all probability sent to correspondents in Kairowan. The whole geography of the places referred to therein points to Kairowan which used to be frequented by Jews from Fez and Andalusia.²⁷ This being so, we infer that the Kairowan Jews already had responsa from R. Jehudai (760-4) as well as from his disciple R. Haninah.

אלא כך שאלו אותם נוהגין מימות אדונינו נהורא: ח"ג, No. 15, דעלמא מר רב יהודאי קדוש וטהור ומימות אדונינו מר רב חנינאי ז"ל ונשמחם לחיי עולם שאם נסרך במרפשא אפי' בחוט השערה אנו מורפין אותם וכן כל מדינות אפריקה. שמענו שבאפס ומקצת אנדלים (Andalusia) בורקין. לכשבאין אצלנו אנו אומרין להן מפני מה אתם עושים דבר זה . . .

שבאפס is a corruption for שבאפס (Fez); the reading ופרס in *Geon.*, II, 30, l. 17, is still more corrupt; yet Pozn., *JQR.*, N. S., III, 418, regards this as the better reading. In *Geon.*, *ibid.*, this responsum is ascribed to R. Zemah, probably of Sura, 882-87 c. E.

Likewise they sent their questions to the other Sura Geonim: R. Moses, 832, R. Cohen Zedek, 845, R. Sar Shalom, 849, and R. Natronai, 853 (ח"ג, No. 15).²⁸ Further, R. Hilai of Sura (either of 792 or of 825) received questions from Kairowan (ג"ה, No. 199 end: כמו שמצאו : בתשובות הגאונים הראשונים כמו ששאלו אבותיהם מן מר הילאי נאון). In short, almost every Gaon of renown, whether of Sura or Pumbedita, was consulted in religious as well as in social questions by the scholars that lived in Kairowan.²⁹

Besides the Jews that lived in the villages around Kairowan (ג"ה, No. 5), there existed a considerable community in Cades in the time of Sherira and Hai (see index to ג"ה under קאבס; to No. 59 see the superscription from a Bodl. MS. (printed by Neubauer, *ŸQR.*, VI, 223-4); מן מסאיל מדינה קאבס לרבינו האי זק"ל: קהל שלמה, Nos. 3-7; cp. Poznański, *Mschr.*, XLIV, 142-3; ג"ק, N^o. 85, and ג"ל, No. 1; Bodl. 2862¹⁰: פ' כובליאר (Shabb. VI, 3) פסרה רבינו שרירא זל פי: חשובה ללכאבסיין. R. Hai mentions a Gaon, R. Abraham of

²⁸ Poznański, in his essay, did not consider this responsum in connexion with Kairowan.

²⁹ Of particular scholars that corresponded with Kairowan we may mention R. Zemah, the judge at the court of the Exilarch Hisdai b. Natronai (Dukes in *בן חנניא*, IV, 141-2, and ג"ה, p. 389); R. Zemah, probably the Gaon of Pumbedita, 872 (ג"ה, No. 210); R. Zemah b. Hayim concerning Eldad ha-Dani (printed by Epstein, *הרני*, pp. 1 ff., and note 1, p. 9); Saadyah corresponded with the Kairowan scholars while he was still in Fayum; R. Dosa, Saadya's son (Wertheimer, *קהלת שלמה*, 72); but chiefly Sherira and Hai (see index to ג"ה). Cp. further ג"ה, Nos. 234, 389; *Geon.*, I, 51, note 2. See further *תשי' מהר"ם*, ed. Bloch, p. 193, No. 99: הקרה ד' לפני ובאו לירי תשובות שהובאו ממדינות אפריקא ספר גדול מחובר מתשו' חכמי אפריקא ששאלו מגאוני בבל והשיבום ובראש התשובות כתב ר' נטרוני בר מר רב נהילאי ריש מתיבתא דמתא מחסיא למרנא ורבנא יהודה בריה דרבינו שאול זצ"ל והתשו' מוחזקת יותר מקונטרס גדול מכמה שאלות ששאלוהו וכו'.

Cabes, in 829 (ג"ל, No. 33: וַאֲמָרוּ בִּי מִרְאֵי אֲבִיבִי וְצ"ל: (שהיה בשנת אק"מ לשטרות היה מכיר בשוחת דקלים). In case this scholar is identical with the Gaon R. Abraham of Pumbedita (816–28), we have then the case of a family from Cabes that settled in Babylon one of whose members attained the dignity of Gaon. The first Gaon to have sent responsa to Cabes was R. Natronai (ג"ה, No. 67). The Jewish community in Nefusa is mentioned in a responsum of R. Ḥaninah of Pumbedita, 938, where the Gaon mentions that the town was sacked and burned in his time, but was soon rebuilt on the return of its former inhabitants, including the Jews (ש"צ, 26 b, No. 26, cp. גמ"מ, No. 47; ש"צ, 99 b, No. 1 and 56 a, No. 16 probably refer to the same event). The existence of Jewish communities in Tobya, or Tobna, and Ashir can be inferred from the heading of a responsum (quoted by Müller, *Einleit.*, 54, note 4, beginning, from a Parma MS.), where it is stated that a number of Jews, that settled in Fez and Ashir, were captives from Tobya (תשובת שאלה מר' שרירא לקהל פאם, דמותיבהון בפאם [ו]אשיר) (דאישתביאו ממדינת טאבי). In ג"ה, No. 38, and גמ"מ, No. 133 the correspondents from Tlemsen also mention the case of Jews that were exiled to Ashir (אשיר stands for אשיר = Ashir, see Harkavy, ג"ה, p. 348 note to p. 15).

The Geonim also had correspondence with scholars from Tahert (ג"ה, No. 16),³⁰ Tlemsen, Fez, and Segelmesssa. In Tlemsen there existed an organized community with representative scholars in its midst. This we find especially the case in time of Sherira and Hai (ג"ה, Nos. 37–43; תש"ר, II, 31, No. 9; גמ"מ, No. 133). Fez, as the capital of the

³⁰ Cp. also the Genizah Book-List III, l. 13 (published by Pozn., *ZfHB.*, XII, 119–20) שאילות תאחרת רבינו האיי, i.e. questions from Tahert sent to Hai Gaon.

dynasty founded by Idris, who built the city in 808 (see Aug. Müller, *ibid.*, I, 550), must have had a leading Jewish community. Yet we find chiefly Sherira and Hai sending responsa to this community (ג"ה, No. 47, end, and No. 386; Warnheim's קבוצת חכמים, 109-10; *Geon.*, II, 43).³¹ Finally, Seḡelmessa possessed a permanent court, with probably an academy, in the time of R. Hai. This fact will show that the local Jewish community must have been of some importance (cp. the superscription to ג"ה, Nos: 68-81). Several responsa reveal the fact that the scholars of Seḡelmessa possessed responsa sent by some other Geonim (ג"ה, Nos. 69 and 71, where R. Zemah, probably of Pumbedita, 882-7, is mentioned; cp. further Nos. 70, 77, 79, and 80; *Saadyana*, p. 62 = *JQR.*, XIV, 230, and Goldberg, Introduction to Ibn Koreish's *Risāla*, p. xvii).

5. Of European countries, the country that maintained the closest relations with the Babylonian Geonim was *Spain*. The sad plight of the large number of Jews in Spain, during the reign of the Goths, was entirely changed for the better with the advent of the Arabs in 711. The Jews could henceforth occupy in Spain the position to which both their numbers and their degree of culture entitled them. The large Moslem empire, extending from the boundaries of India to Spain, facilitated to a very large extent the relations of the Spanish Jews with the Babylonian Academies. Though it took more than a year

³¹ A letter by Sam. b. Ḥofni to Fez (*JQR.*, XVIII, 404) alludes to persecutions from which the Jews of Fez suffered: ואכן באה שמועתכם ויחרר לבבנו ויתר ממקומו ותבך עיינינו ולבבותינו על הרם מקדשנו ועל הרג בני עמינו ועל המאורע לבחורינו ואל אלהינו נדרוש להרוג הורגיהם ולהכות בדבר מביהם . . . ומלפניו נבקש לנחם אותנו ואתכם להטיב לכם . . . ולהפוך לששון אבליכם ולשמח לבבותיכם מיוגונכם . . .

for a letter from Spain to reach Babylon, as we learn from צ"ש, 20^b, No. 12, yet very many questions were sent from Spain to the Geonim. The connexions between Spain and Babylon go back to the times immediately succeeding the landing of the Arabs in Spain. Sherira (*Letter*, p. 36) reports that the Exilarch Natronai b. Ḥabibai, after his deposal (about 772), left Babylon for the West (מערב), which most probably refers to Spain, as other sources show (see *Geon.*, I, 17, note 2). R. Jacob of Sura (801–5) probably had correspondence with the Jews of Andalusia (ג"ח, No. 15, cp. above, p. 482). Much new information about the relations of the Geonim with the Spanish Jews is to be found in the interesting Bodleian Genizah Fragment (published by Cowley, *JQR.*, XVIII, 399 ff.). The writer of the letter (dated 953), who was a descendant of the Gaon R. Paltoi, tells us that several Geonim of Sura on the one hand, from R. Zadoc, 823, to R. Naḥshon, 874–82, as well as several Geonim of Pumbedita, from R. Paltoi, 842–58, to R. Cohen-Zedek, 926–35, on the other hand, were frequently consulted by the Spanish Jews. It is further stated there that R. Paltoi sent to Spain the whole Talmud, together with a commentary on it. Well-known is the Prayer Book, the so-called סדר רב עמרם, which R. Amram sent to the community of Barcelona (see heading of סדר רב עמרם (= סר"ע) = ג"ל, No. 56).³² It was only since the middle of the tenth century, when R. Moses and his

³² Saadya also had correspondence with the Spanish communities, as Ibn David (Neub., I, 74) writes: ויש לי ר' מאיר בן ביבש שראה גליון של רב סעדיה גאון ז"ל וכתוב עליו לקהל קורטובא ואלבירה ואליסאנה ובנאנה וקלסאנה ואשבילה ומרידה העיר הגדולה וכל ערי ישראל אשר סביבותיה. Perhaps this was a circular epistle in connexion with the Ben Meir dispute concerning the calendar.—Saadya's son, Dosa, corresponded with Ḥasday ibn Shaprut (Ibn Daud, *l. c.*, 66).

son R. Enoch flourished in Cordova as heads of a large school, that the Spanish Jews became independent of the Babylonian Academies with regard to their religious instruction. Few responsa comparatively were therefore sent to Spain by Sherira and Hai (see especially about the relations of the Geonim with Spain, Eppenstein, *Monatsschrift*, 1912, 80-95). Special mention should be made of the intercourse which R. Natronai of Sura, 853-6, maintained with the community of Lucena. From a responsum of his we learn that in his time practically the whole town of Lucena was inhabited by Jews. Cordova had also a preponderant majority of Jews.³³ From Lucena there came a scholar, R. Elieser, to Sura, where he occupied the position of Alluf (cp. ג"ה, No. 386; ש"צ, 3 a, No. 17; 25 a, No. 15; and פדר רב עמרם, ed. Warsaw, 38 a).

6. Only scanty information is to be obtained about the other countries to which the influence of the Geonim extended. A Genizah fragment (published in *Geon.*, II, 57, top) establishes the fact that Sherira as well as Hai carried on correspondence with the famous Rabbi Meshullam b. Kalonymos of Lucca in Italy (שאלות מרב משולם בן מרב) אנקולינימוס ממדינת לוכה אשר בארץ פרננה לרבינו שרירא גאון והאיי (א"ב ז"ל). This superscription proves that Rappoport was right in his suggestion (*Bikkure ha 'Ittim*, 1839, 91, and Introduction to ג"ה, 12 b) that R. Meshullam lived in Lucca. Graetz's (*V⁴*, 545, note 2) contention that he lived in

³³ שביון אליסנה מקום ישראל ויש, ed. Warnheim, 100: בא ישראל הרבה... ואין ביניהם גוי כל עיקר... ואי אפילו בקרטובה היה ברבר הזה ששם מקום מלכות וישראל מרובים וישמעאל מעט... בזכות שמים אוליסאנה אין בה גוי שאוסר: 26, No. 26, גמ"מ, עליוכס.

Zalcona, Catalonia, is thus disposed of by the above Genizah Fragment.³⁴ These connexions between Italian-French scholars and Babylonian Academies can be traced to still earlier times. The responsum in ג"ק, No. 118, the last of the group of responsa assigned to Kalonymos, ends with כתבו ממחיבתה, וכן, which probably refers to one of two famous academies of Babylon. R. Natronai's reference in ש"צ, 20 b, No. 12 (see above, p. 486) to פרננה also shows that the Geonim stood in correspondence with the Jews in southern France and Italy.³⁵ There are several references in the responsa to חכמי אדום 'the scholars of Edom', which name denoted all countries under Christian rule, especially Italy and the Byzantine Empire.³⁶ In particular, correspondents from Kairowan to Sherira and Hai refer to these 'scholars of Edom', by whom in all probability Italian scholars are meant.³⁷ From ג"ה, No. 225, we learn that there came to R. Hai disciples from Constantinople (ועבשיו שאלנו את התלמידים היונים המצויים לפנינו מן קצטנטינה).

³⁴ Cp. further on this point Müller, *Responsen des R. Kalonymos aus Lucca*, pp. 2-3, and *Responsen des R. Meschullam*, p. 4; Epstein, *RÉJ.*, XXIV, 149-51, and XXVII, 81-90; Gross., *Monatsschrift*, 1878, 249.

³⁵ פרננה used to denote both France and Italy (cp. *Geon.*, II, 55).

³⁶ Cp. also קי"ל בבני רומי שהשיבו לר' שר § 82: שער דורא. We thus find this Gaon already corresponding with Italian scholars. But we should have expected the Gaon sending the responsum to the scholars of Rome, and not the reverse (שהשיבו).

³⁷ Cp. R. Hai (in Rabad's דעים תמים, No. 119): שאל רבינו הצדיק: תמים דעים; וי"ל . . . כי חברו לו דברים עם חכמי אדום טעם כמה מחכמי א"י ומחכמי ארץ אדום . . . וזה שכתבתם כי: 57 f.; וקנים הגידו לכם אנשים מרומי ומא"י. From גמ"מ, No. 34, it appears that there came to the academy of Kairowan disciples from Italy; but the place of provenance of the question is not certain. Müller's note (No. 1) is impossible, since the Gaon speaks of disciples, who came to the place of the correspondents.

One responsum (ascribed in ת"ש, No. 230, to R. Mattithiah of Pumbedita, 861-9, but in תש"ר, II, 57, No. 4, to R. Hai) deals with the question of feeding the silk-worms on the Sabbath. This responsum was probably sent to Greece, where the cultivation of silk was very common (see Gr. V⁴, 256, note 1, and now also Krauss, *l.c.*, 74, note 1). Finally Sherira and Hai received questions from Wādi'l Ḳurā in Arabia (ת"ג, 201-3 and *Geon.*, II, 61). Since the expulsion of the Jews from Arabia by Mohammed and Omar, this is the first reference made to a Jewish community in that country. The existence of a community in Wādi'l Ḳurā in the time of Sherira and Hai tends to strengthen the opinion of those scholars who maintain that Omar drove out in 640 the Jews of Ḥaibar only, but not those of Wādi'l Ḳurā (see Harkavy, ת"ג, 397, and Leszynsky, *op. cit.*, 113). Leszynsky states from Arabic sources that still about the year 1000 the majority of the inhabitants of Wādi'l Ḳurā were Jews (see now also Friedlaender, *ŹQR.*, N. S., I, 249-51).

The whole of this chapter forms a kind of an introduction to the following investigations. In order to obtain a picture of the life of the Jewry of that period, as far as can be gathered from the Gaonic responsa, it was necessary to give a prefatory sketch of the extent of the influence of the Geonim on the Jewry all over the Diaspora. In two of the responsa collections, ת"ק and גמ"ז, there is incorporated a considerable number of responsa sent by Spanish and Italian-French scholars who were contemporaries of Sherira and Hai. These responsa contain important material for the knowledge of the life of the Jews in Spain and southern France. Since in the time

of Sherira the Jews of these countries became more and more independent in religious instruction of the Babylonian Academies, the responsa of the above scholars had to be used for supplementing the material required for the purpose of this treatise.

(To be continued.)